
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5432

AN ACT CONCERNING LIMITS ON SANCTIONS UNDER THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES PROGRAM.

SUMMARY:

This bill relaxes the sanctions (i.e., reduction in benefits) that the Department of Social Services (DSS) imposes on families receiving Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) when the adult in the family does not comply with an employment services requirement. Specifically, it (1) eliminates the minimum duration of the benefit reduction and instead requires benefits to be restored as soon as the adult is compliant and (2) reduces the reduction amount for the third and subsequent incidences of noncompliance.

The bill also reduces, from 100% to 50%, the amount by which DSS reduces a family's TFA benefit when the adult in the family, without good cause fails to (1) attend any scheduled assessment appointment or interview relating to the establishment of an employment plan or (2) comply with an employment services requirement during a six-month extension to the program's 21-month time limit.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011

SANCTIONS FOR NONCOMPLIANCE

Limit on Amount and Duration of Sanction

The bill requires DSS to reduce TFA benefits by a smaller amount and restore full benefits as soon as an adult in a family receiving TFA who is noncompliant with an employment services requirement and without good cause complies with his or her employment services plan. Table 1 illustrates the change.

Table 1: Sanctions for Noncompliance

Violation	Penalty	
	Current Law	Bill
1 st	25% of full family benefit for three consecutive months	25% of benefit until adult complies
2 nd	35% of benefit for three months	35% of benefit until adult complies
3 rd and subsequent	Full benefit reduction for three months	50% reduction of benefit until adult complies

Penalty for Nonattendance at Appointments or Noncompliance with Employment Services Requirement During an Extension

Regardless of the law described above, DSS currently must terminate TFA for a family when the adult in the family who is required by law to participate in an employment services activity fails, without good cause, to (1) attend any scheduled assessment appointment or interview related to establishing an employment plan or (2) comply with an employment services requirement during an extension to the law's 21-month limit on TFA benefits. If the individual attends a subsequently scheduled appointment or interview, benefits must be reinstated.

The bill requires DSS to reduce the family benefit by half, instead of the full amount, when this happens.

The law already prohibits DSS from granting TFA to an applicant before he or she attends an initial scheduled employment services assessment interview and participates in developing an employment plan with Department of Labor (DOL) staff. But it may not delay granting TFA if (1) it schedules the initial interview more than 10 business days after the application date or (2) DOL does not complete an employment services plan for the applicant within 10 business days of the date when the applicant attends an employment services assessment interview.

Although it is not clear, it does not appear that the bill's provision regarding reducing the benefit for not attending an appointment or interview would conflict with this law since, in this instance, the family

has not yet received TFA.

BACKGROUND

Jobs First

The state's welfare-to-work program is called Jobs First. It consists of two parts—TFA, which generally provides cash assistance for 21 months to low-income families with dependent children and Employment Services, in which the able-bodied adult in the family is expected to participate in a work-related activity for 30 hours per week as a condition of the family receiving ongoing assistance. DSS runs the TFA program and the DOL runs Jobs First Employment Services. The federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant provides most of the funding for Jobs First.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 11 Nay 6 (03/22/2011)